

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-34 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

Please enter the following new claims for consideration by the Examiner:

(New) 35. A surgical retractor system for creating an opening through an incision in a patient comprising:

a drive mechanism having first and second members extending therefrom, said first member being moveable, via said drive mechanism, relative to said second member; and

at least one of said members comprising at least one suture stay having an open slot for receiving free end portions of a suture and a suture lock movably mounted with respect to said open slot and adapted to move away from a side of said slot as an end portion of the suture is pulled into the slot, said suture lock moving against said side of said slot to press said end portion against said side of said slot thereby preventing said end portion from moving within said slot.

(New) 36. The surgical retractor system of claim 35, further comprising a biasing member for biasing said suture lock against said side of said slot, and wherein said suture lock is mounted in a recess adjacent said open slot and extends out of said recess and into said open slot.

(New) 37. The surgical retractor system of claim 35, wherein at least one of said first and second members comprises a plurality of said suture stays and said suture locks.

(New) 38. The surgical retractor system of claim 37, wherein each of said first and second members comprises a plurality of said suture stays and said suture locks.

(New) 39. The surgical retractor system of claim 35, wherein said at least one suture stay having a suture lock is removable from the retractor system.

(New) 40. The surgical retractor system of claim 37, wherein said plurality of said suture stays and said suture locks are removable from the retractor system.

(New) 41. The surgical retractor system of claim 38, wherein said plurality of said suture stays and said suture locks are removable from the retractor system.

(New) 42. The surgical retractor system of claim 35, wherein each said suture stay and suture lock is recessed into said respective member, allowing another instrument to be mounted or passed thereover.

(New) 43. The surgical retractor system of claim 36, wherein said biasing member comprises a piece of resilient foam placed between said suture lock and a wall of said recess.

(New) 44. The retractor system of claim 35, wherein said suture lock is angled with respect to said side of said slot when said suture lock is moved away from said side, making said suture lock self-locking in one direction.

(New) 45. The retractor system of claim 35, wherein said suture lock comprises teeth or ridges on an end which contacts said side of said slot, to ensure acceptable traction against said end portions.

(New) 46. The retractor system of claim 35, wherein at least one of said first and second members comprises an elongate rail oriented along at least a portion of a length thereof, said at least one suture stay and suture lock being recessed therein.

(New) 47. The retractor system of claim 46, wherein said rail extends outwardly from said member.

(New) 48. The retractor system of claim 47, wherein said rail has a T-shaped cross-section.

(New) 49. The retractor system of claim 45, where each of said first and second members comprises an elongate rail oriented along at least a portion of a length thereof, and each of said first and

second members comprises a plurality of said suture stays and suture locks recessed in said respective rails.

(New) 50. The retractor system of claim 49, wherein each said rail extends from said respective member and forms a T-shaped cross-section.

(New) 51. A suture stay adapted for use in a surgical retractor system, said suture stay being adapted to receive free end portions of surgical suture and retain the suture under tension, said suture stay comprising:

an open slot for receiving a free end portion of the suture and a suture lock movably mounted with respect to said open slot and adapted to move away from a side of said slot as the free end portion of the suture is pulled into the slot, said suture lock being biased against said side of said slot to press said free end portion against said side of said slot thereby preventing said free end portion from moving within said slot.

(New) 52. The suture stay of claim 51, further comprising a biasing member for biasing said suture lock against said side of said slot, and wherein said suture lock is adapted to be mounted in a recess adjacent said open slot and extends out of said recess and into said open slot.

(New) 53. The suture stay of claim 51, wherein said suture stay is adapted to be removably mounted to the surgical retractor system.

(New) 54. An array of suture stays adapted for use in a surgical retractor system, each said suture stay being adapted to receive free end portions of a surgical suture and retain the suture under tension, each said suture stay comprising:

an open slot for receiving a free end portion of the suture and a suture lock movably mounted with respect to said open slot and adapted to move away from a side of said slot as the end portion of the surgical suture is pulled into the slot, said suture lock moving against said side of said slot to press said free end portion against said side of said slot thereby preventing said free end portion from moving within said slot.

(New) 55. The array of claim 54, wherein said array is adapted to be removably mounted to the surgical retractor system.

(New) 56. The array of claim 55, wherein said suture stays are located in a retractor arm extending from a retractor mechanism of the surgical retractor system.

(New) 57. The array of claim 56, wherein said suture stays are arranged along a curve.